Week 8 Address

COMPUTERS / HILLEL SEGAL

Tornado Notes handy, addictive

A handy note-taking program with the clever name of Tornado Notes may take your office by storm.

This $53.45 PC program from Micro Logic Corp. of Hackensack, N.J. lets you keep track of all those important details that are the easiest to forget — names of business contacts, due dates for projects, to do lists, telephone numbers, and product information. All can be entered easily and retrieved in an instant.

What makes Tornado Notes special is first, it's memory resident, allowing data to be accessed while you're in the middle of another program. Second, no matter how disorganized your information was when you entered it, the program contains an ingenious way to find any piece of data almost as fast as you can think of it. And third, it's addictive. I predict you'll use Tornado Notes every day if you give it

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a try.

Indeed, within days of installing the program and demonstrating it to several people in my office, they had already put it to use. Their only complaint was that it took a bit longer than they expected to learn all the various commands. But the basics are easy.

After the program has been set up on your computer to load automatically when you turn it on, here's all you have to know to use it:

✔ Touch the Alt and J keys simultaneously to switch to Tornado Notes. No matter what application program you're using (accounting, word processing, data base or whatever), your application program will be suspended temporarily.

✔ Touch the N key (for "Note") and a small box will appear on the screen. Anything that you then type will appear in the

box. Touch the Esc key twice to get out of the edit mode.

✔ To retrieve all the boxes of data with certain information, just touch the G key (for "Get") and then any string of characters that's contained in those notes. For example, if you entered several boxes of data with information about widgets, simply type "widget" and all those boxes instantly appear on the screen.

✔ Any of the boxes on the screen can be highlighted by touching any number key. You can then edit or add information to the highlighted box by touching E (for "Edit"). When you're finished editing or adding data, touch Esc again.

✔ Touch Alt-J again and you're back in your application program where you were before you used Tornado notes.

That's all there is to it. The beauty of the program is the ease with which you can retrieve and add data. And that's the part that's addictive.

One aspect of Tornado Notes

that I particularly liked was the way it organized notes into "piles," much like a pile of real notes on your desk. You can flip through the stack — adding, deleting, or changing them as you go — or bring the more important notes to the top and bury the less important ones.

On the down side, as my staff members noted, it does take a while to get used to the commands.

Also, you must remember to save your data periodically. If you don't, it'll wind up in data heaven when you shut off your computer. That's one disadvantage of using memory resident programs.

The bottom line: Tornado Notes is an inexpensive note-taking program for PCs that's easy to set up and surprisingly handy after you get the knack of it.

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